

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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P R 211530Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5902
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS
USSOUTHCOM
AMCONSUL BARRANQUILLA POUCH
AMCONSUL CALI POUCH
AMCMNSUL MEDELLIN POUCH

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, ETRD, PINS, PEPR, CO
SUBJECT: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY. THE PREPARATION OF CANDIDATE LISTS FOR THE FEBRUARY CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS WAS THE MAIN POLITICAL ACTIVITY, ALTHOUGH THE CONFIRMATION OF AN ARREST ORDER AGAINST THE PRESIDENT OF THE HOUSE OVERSHADOWED THE POLITICAL SCENE. REMARKS BY THE FOREIGN MINISTER CRITICAL OF US TRADE POLICIES RECEIVED CONSIDERABLE NEWS COVERAGE; HOWEVER, HE CLAIMED THAT THE MEDIA GAVE HIS REMARKS THE WRONG EMPHASIS. CONCERN OVER KIDNAPPINGS CONTINUED AS ANOTHER VICTIM WAS FOUND MURDERED, AND STILL ANOTHER REPORTED KIDNAPPED. THE UNESCO CONFERENCE CLOSED AFTER HAVING PASSED A MODIFIED VERSION OF THE VENEZUELAN RESOLUTION CALLING FOR THE CREATION OF A STATE-CONTROLLED NEWS AGENCY. END SUMMARY.

2. PARTIES BEGIN FORMING CANDIDATE LISTS. WHILE HEAVY POLITICAL
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CAMPAIGNING CONTINUES UNABATED, LEADERS OF FACTIONS OF BOTH MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE BEGUN FORMING THEIR LISTS OF CANDIDATES FOR THE FEBRUARY 26 ELECTIONS. INDEPENDENT CANDIDATE GENERAL (R) ALVARO VALENCIA, WHO DECIDED NOT TO SUBMIT A SLATE OF CONGRESSIONAL ASPIRANTS, REVEALED HIS NATIONAL RENOVATION MOVEMENT'S (MRN) PLATFORM WHICH CALLS FOR GREATER EMPHASIS ON COLOMBIAN SOVEREIGNTY, INCREASED SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND THE FULL

OBSERVANCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

3. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES PRESIDENT UNDER ARREST ORDER. A SUPERIOR COURT CONFIRMED A LOWER COURT DECISION ORDERING THAT ALBERTO SANTOFIMIO BOTERO, THE PRESIDENT OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, BE PLACED UNDER ARREST WHILE INVESTIGATIONS CONTINUE OF ALLEGATIONS THAT HE HAD MISUSED HIS OFFICE FOR PERSONAL GAIN. HIS LAWYERS HAVE APPEALED THE LATEST DECISION, ARGUING THAT SANTOFIMIO ENJOYS PARLIAMENTARY IMMUNITY. THE ARREST ORDER HAS PROBABLY WRECKED SANTOFIMIO'S PRESIDENTIAL AMBITIONS, THOUGH HE IS STILL EXPECTED TO BE ELECTED TO THE SENATE IN FEBRUARY (BOGOTA 559).

4. FOREIGN MINISTER CRITICIZES US PROTECTIONISM. WHILE IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC LAST WEEK TO SIGN THE MARITIME DELIMITATION AGREEMENT, AND AGAIN UPON HIS AIRPORT RETURN IN BOGOTA, FOREIGN MINISTER LEVANO TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO DEPLORE THE RETURN OF THE "OLD POLICY" OF INCREASING TRADE PROTECTIONISM IN THE UNITED STATES. HE CITED GROWING ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, PARTICULARLY MENTIONING US IMPORT RESTRICTIONS IN FLOWERS, LEATHER GOODS, SHOES AND TEXTILES. IN A SEPARATE CONVERSATION WITH THE AMBASSADOR, HOWEVER, LEVANO SAID THAT THE NEWSPAPER STORIES GAVE HIS REMARKS THE WRONG EMPHASIS; HIS MAJOR POINT, HE SAID, WAS THAT THE US SHOULD NOT HANDLE ITS TRADE ISSUES WITH LDCS IN THE SAME MANNER IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WHICH IT HANDLES THOSE WITH JAPAN.

5. PUBLIC ORDER. THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE ANNOUNCED ON JANUARY 20 THAT A DECREE WOULD BE ISSUED SHORTLY WHICH WOULD GIVE SECURITY FORCES MORE FREEDOM OF ACTION IN COMBATTING KIDNAPPINGS AND OTHER CRIMES. DURING THE WEEK, RELATIVES OF A WEALTHY BUSINESSMAN REVEALED THAT HE HAD BEEN KIDNAPPED ON JANUARY 10 AND A LARGE RANSOM DEMANDED FOR HIS RELEASE; AS FREQUENTLY HAPPENS, THE RELATIVES HAD INITIALLY CONCEALED THE KIDNAPPING IN HOPES OF ARRANGING THE VICTIM'S RELEASE WITHOUT BRINGING IN THE AUTHORITIES. A YOUNG ECONOMIST WHO HAD BEEN KIDNAPPED IN EARLY NOVEMBER WAS FOUND DEAD ON JANUARY 14. POLITICALLY MOTIVATED VIOLENCE ALSO CONTINUED AS AN UNIDENTIFIED GROUP OF GUERRILLAS AMBUSHED A POLICE PATROL IN THE DEPARTMENT OF VALLE, KILLING ONE OFFICER AND WOUNDING ANOTHER. IN BOYACA DEPARTMENT, AUTHORITIES ANNOUNCED THE DISCOVERY OF THE BODIES OF FIVE PEASANTS BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN EXECUTED AS GOVERNMENT INFORMANTS BY THE FARC.

6. UNESCO CONFERENCE CONCLUDES. THE UNESCO CONFERENCE ON CULTURAL POLICY IN LATIN AMERICAN AND THE CARIBBEAN CONCLUDED THIS WEEK WITH VERY LITTLE ACCOMPLISHED. THE CONFERENCE'S

SECOND WEEK WAS HIGHLIGHTED BY A VENEZUELAN PROPOSAL FOR A
STATE-CONTROLLED LATIN AMERICAN NEWS ORGANIZATION. A
MODIFIED VERSION OF THE VENEZUELAN RESOLUTION WAS FINALLY APPROVED
(BOGOTA 054). VENEZUELA WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THE TENDENCY OF
INTERNATONAL NEWS AGENCIES TO SENSATIONALIZE THEIR REPORTING
ABOUT LATIN AMERICA. AN UNDERLYING CONCERN EXPRESSED DURING
THE CONFERENCE WAS THE LIMITED EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC
PLANNING DUE TO A LACK OF CULTURAL INTEGRATION IN LATIN
AMERICA.
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